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ABSTRACT

In spite of considerable progress on racial equality issues and multicultural education made in the schools of the United Kingdom, many areas of disadvantage remain for ethnic minority students and some new ones have emerged. Quite apart from the moral and educational imperatives behind policies against racism, there are legal implications for schools that neglect these areas of concern. The duties of local authorities under the Race Relations Act of 1976 are outlined. Suggestions are also made for things classroom teachers can do to promote racial equality in the whole school. In addition to their role in making whole-school policy, teachers can do much in specific subject areas to enhance equality for all students and combat racist behavior and assumptions. Some ideas are offered for various subject areas. Sensitivity to the languages and culture of students is needed, and educational establishments can take a leading role in the whole area of equal opportunities. (SLD)

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Racial Inequality in Schools
by
Association of Teachers and Lecturers
Commission for Racial Equality

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Racial Equality in ATL

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Foreword

Racial equality and positive relationships between all pupils in our schools are aims which the Association of Teachers and Lecturers fully supports. Its commitment to working for these goals lies behind the publication of this booklet.

This is not the first ATL publication on race. The Association produced *Multi-Cultural and Anti-Racist Education Today* in 1987 which was updated early in the 1990s. But education and society never stand still and the advice and guidance offered here is needed now more than ever.

It should be read by all teachers who want to see racial equality become a reality in education.

Peter Smith
General Secretary, ATL

I welcome this new publication and commend it to all teachers. The Association of Teachers and Lecturers is to be congratulated for its leadership in bringing to the fore issues that many, wrongly, still feel should be kept in the background.

Racial equality in education is about raising standards for all children, and guaranteeing them a secure and high quality education. We know, unfortunately, that race is a determinant of achievement. I believe this guidance will help to create a situation where it is no longer.

Sir Herman Ouseley
Chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality

Winning on race?

Though the Race Relations Act was passed more than 20 years ago, racial inequality has not been eradicated from the nation's schools and is still a live issue which affects pupils, staff and their families, as well as the wider community.

Despite considerable progress on racial equality issues and multi-cultural education since the Association issued its book *Multi-Cultural and Anti-Racist Education Today* nearly ten years ago, many areas of disadvantage remain for ethnic minority pupils and some new ones have emerged or are now visible. The OFSTED publication, *Exclusions from School* (HMSO, 1997) shows that Afro-Caribbean pupils are much more likely than their white or Asian peers to be excluded from school. Another OFSTED report, *Recent Research on the Achievements of Ethnic Minority Pupils* (HMSO, 1996) threw up a number of concerns. It showed that while achievement has been rising among most ethnic groups, progress for Afro-Caribbean pupils, especially boys, has been slower and in some areas has actually worsened.

The reasons for these inequalities are complex and the subject of much controversy. But the part played by racial discrimination within schools, whether intentional or unintentional, cannot be ignored.

The fact that racism still exists in education could be a cause for pessimism amongst teachers. If discrimination remains after more than a decade of anti-racist and multi-cultural education, what hope is there that racial disadvantage can be rooted out of the system? But progress has been made on many fronts — pupils are much better informed about people of a different culture or religion from themselves, and teachers are more aware of the ways in which their practice impacts on pupils. Most state schools have some kind of policy on racism and/or equal opportunities. On a parallel issue, the substantial improvement in the performance of girls in schools shows what can be done when policies against discrimination and stereotyping are pursued.

ATL and equal opportunities

ATL's policy on racism and racial equality is clear. Its *Equal Opportunities Statement of Principles* says that ATL 'will seek to promote the ideas of equal opportunities in all fields of education' and that 'ATL will support its members in seeking to implement equal opportunities policies within schools and colleges to combat discrimination on the grounds of . . . race . . .'

As well as committing itself to supporting members who are subject to discriminatory conduct and opposing stereotyping of staff or students, it says that ATL will 'seek to ensure that schools and colleges have clear statements of policy, fully implemented, under constant review, with staff training to ensure full implementation' and that ATL 'will look to LEAs and Governing Bodies to have clear Equal Opportunities Policies and appropriate monitoring mechanisms'.

Legal responsibilities

Quite apart from the moral and educational imperatives behind policies against racism, there are legal implications for schools which neglect these areas of concern.

a) The duty of local authorities

It should be borne in mind that schools are covered by the Race Relations Act 1976. Section 71 of the Act states that local authorities have a duty to:

'make appropriate arrangements with a view to securing that their various functions are carried out with due regard to the need

a) to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination and

b) to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups'.

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This duty is owed to all teachers, ancillaries and other school-based staff as well as pupils.

b) The duty to pupils

Section 17 of the Race Relations Act makes it unlawful for those in charge of any educational establishment to discriminate in the way that a pupil is offered access to any benefits, services or facilities by subjecting the pupil to any detriment. The detriment could include failing to take reasonable steps to deal with racial discrimination and harassment.

It is therefore essential that proper procedures are in place to deal quickly and effectively with any forms of discrimination that may occur in the school.

c) The duty to employees

As employers, LEAs, grant-maintained school governors and independent schools have a duty not to discriminate on racial grounds against employees or applicants. The Race Relations Act says:

'It is unlawful for a person, in relation to employment by him at an establishment in Great Britain, to discriminate against another

a) in the arrangements he makes for the purpose of determining who should be offered that employment; or

b) in the terms on which he offers him that employment; or

c) by refusing or deliberately omitting to offer him that access to employment

. . . or by dismissing him or subjecting him to any other detriment'.

(Race Relations Act 1976, Section 4)

The Act also outlaws any discrimination in access to promotion, transfer or training.

It is therefore important that anti-discriminatory policies are in place to encourage applications for employment from people of all ethnic backgrounds.

School policies

Decisions on whole-school policies will largely be in the hands of the senior management team. But what can classroom teachers do practically to move things forward? How can they make sure that their schools have an effective policy for racial equality, and that it is implemented? And how can they as individuals improve their practice?

Virtually every LEA should already have an equal opportunities policy agreed with the trade unions, encompassing racial equality, which should have been adopted by those schools still operating under the LEA umbrella. Schools may also choose to extend and expand on this policy, following consultations with their staff. Grant-maintained schools need not abide by the LEA's equal opportunities policy, but the best will have a policy of their own or one modelled on the LEA's version. (Proposed 'foundation' schools appear likely to be run on broadly similar lines). Independent schools have to comply with the law on racial discrimination, but need not have a written policy. However, a written policy might provide evidence that they have made efforts to comply with the law, in any legal action brought against them under race relations legislation.

Teachers who find themselves in a grant-maintained or independent school without an equal opportunities policy, or one that they believe is inadequate and want to improve, are advised to contact their ATL

representative in the first instance. Taking joint action with ATL colleagues and with other professional associations is likely to be more effective than complaining as a lone voice.

Even where there is a policy, does it or other written documentation cover all the aspects of racial equality that the school needs to address? Teaching staff wishing to assess the adequacy of their school's policy should consider a number of issues. Any school policy should have the explicit support of the headteacher and all senior staff, and all staff and governors should be involved in formulating it. Parents, and where appropriate to their age, pupils, should also be involved in the process of drawing it up and should be aware of its requirements. There should be a designated member of staff who is responsible for co-ordinating work on equality issues.

Whether within the equal opportunities policy or elsewhere, the school should have clear procedures for recording and dealing with bullying and harassment in general, and racist bullying and harassment in particular. A school which is able to deal calmly and effectively with all types of bullying will be better placed to handle racial incidents when they occur, but where there is a racial element to an issue this should be acknowledged and challenged, and this includes racist name-calling and graffiti. Pupils should be made aware that the policy extends to behaviour beyond the school gates, and those who become victims of racial incidents away from school should be supported.

Overtly racist behaviour by teaching or support staff should be dealt with through disciplinary procedures, and racially abusive language by pupils or staff should be challenged.

The school should have a language policy, including support for pupils whose first language is not English (which may be provided through Section 11 funding). Pupils should be encouraged to use their home language, for example in same language groups and pairs or with bilingual staff, and those who are literate in their first language should have access to dictionaries and glossaries (see further under **Language questions**, below).

The equal opportunities policy should include a statement of those activities considered by the school to be racist and unacceptable. The school should make efforts to ensure that there is adequate representation of ethnic minorities on the governing body and the governors should make arrangements to receive training in fair employment practices for themselves. There should be written guidance on fair employment practices, and the school's policies should combat the under-representation of ethnic minorities in the teaching profession, through the use of bias-free interviewing and selection procedures and the targeting of advertising. However, ATL believes the use of quotas is not appropriate.

The governing body and senior management should keep the school's policy and practices under regular review to ensure that these are continuing to deliver the intended outcomes. To this end, the school should collect and use statistics on the ethnic origins of pupils, in order to monitor its effectiveness and identify issues which need attention. Information about individual pupils should never be revealed, nor should statistics be made available to any groups which could be likely to use them for racist purposes. The school should receive information and advice from the LEA or another outside body with expertise in the field, such as the Commission for Racial Equality, in order to review its progress in comparison with other schools.

The governors and senior management should look at the school's admissions procedures to see whether they discriminate unintentionally against certain

ethnic minorities, and take steps to remedy any such bias, if necessary. Arrangements for welcoming visitors should be suitable and accessible for parents of all backgrounds, and information for parents should be available in languages other than English, where appropriate. The school's practice in careers education should ensure that stereotyped assumptions are not driving the careers advice given to young people and that pupils are encouraged to extend their aspirations.

The school should take account of the beliefs and customs of ethnic minority communities with regard to such issues as diet and dress, doing so by forging close links with parents and community groups. Teachers should be encouraged to be self-aware in their teaching and inter-actions with pupils and staff, and be equipped to eliminate unintentional bias and stereotyping from their practice, for example through INSET.

The major festivals celebrated by children from different cultures should be acknowledged in school and efforts should be made not to allow school activities to clash with them.

Classroom practice and the curriculum

While classroom teachers should have an input into the formulation of whole-school policy, there is much that can be done in specific subject areas to enhance equality for all pupils and combat racist behaviour and assumptions. The curriculum should reflect ethnic and cultural diversity and pupils should be encouraged to respect and value people of a different cultural background from themselves. Pupils should be encouraged explicitly to understand the nature of prejudice and be equipped to challenge it.

Some examples of good practice and suggestions for action are given below, with grateful thanks to the Runnymede Trust for examples adapted from its book, *Equality Assurance in Schools* (Trentham Books, 1993). These are not prescriptive or exhaustive, and specific activities will, of course, form only a part of the school curriculum. However, it is important to bear in mind the multicultural dimension and implications of all the education, both explicit and implicit, given to pupils.

It is also important to acknowledge that pupils from different cultures and different races have their own distinct identities, just as second and third generation ethnic minorities, and children of mixed parentage,

have differing concerns from recent immigrants and refugee children.

Care should be taken in all National Curriculum subjects and religious education to ensure that examples and case studies are taken from different countries and cultures. In schools following the best practice, books and materials show people from various ethnic groups engaged in, for example, scientific and artistic endeavour, and people from developing countries are not shown merely in passive and dependent roles.

In **art, English** and **music**, pupils are given opportunities to experience works from non-Western traditions and literature from a variety of times and places, and are not taught that European art, music and literature are intrinsically superior to that produced by other cultures. They see that artistic, literary and musical heritages significant to themselves and their families are valued in the curriculum. Stories and songs from different sources, including pupils' homes, are explored in school. They are given opportunities to explore their own and others' cultural identity through their creative work. Artists, musicians, poets and storytellers visiting the school come from a variety of cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Pupils learn about both the diversity of cultural expression and the common elements and shared human concerns which are found within it. Pupils learn that different traditions have influenced each other and in particular are made aware of non-European influences on Western art and music.

In **English**, staff have agreed criteria for choosing texts and strategies for dealing with racist language or assumptions arising from certain texts used in class. Pupils learn skills of critical examination and to question stereotypical views when they encounter them in literature or other kinds of writing. Studies of language include exploring how certain words can have racist connotations in particular contexts and how words are employed when there are differences of power and status between those who use them. Pupils learn that switching between different codes, registers and languages in writing and speaking for different purposes is normal throughout the world, and are helped to find skills for doing so themselves.

In **mathematics**, **science**, and **technology**, the specialist language used is explained clearly, to enable all pupils to take part. Work is made intelligible through context and practical activities where necessary, so that learning is not made wholly dependent on competence in English. Pupils are made aware that scientific knowledge and mathematics have developed throughout the world and that their progress has depended on the contribution of people from many cultures. Games, puzzles and tasks in **mathematics** reflect pupils' experience of daily life, including their cultural and linguistic experiences. Wall displays showing counting systems and notation from around the world could be made and designs and patterns from different cultures could be used in teaching mathematical concepts.

With older pupils, cultural and religious views are considered when discussing the nature of scientific ideas. Through **science**, pupils learn about the unscientific basis of claims used to justify racism and how these have been shaped in the past by social and political interests. As well as looking at competition in nature, reference is made to the existence of co-operation and mutual dependency, and to their benefits. In **technology**, pupils are made aware that all societies use a range of simple and complex technologies and that simple technology can often be the most appropriate. Their assignments refer to a variety of cultural contexts, where appropriate, but common human problems and needs are also emphasised. Tasks and activities reflect the pupils' first-hand experiences and the multicultural nature of society.

Geography and **history** reflect the diversity of human experience and interaction with the environment, as well as elements common to all human societies. Pupils draw on their own and their families' experience of change and social trends, and explore the history of their family, community, and neighbourhood, relating this to the wider world. Pupils understand that migration and movements of population have been common experiences throughout human history. In **geography**, they recognise the global context of economic development and the impact of local decisions on the wider world. When studying economic development in Europe and in developing countries, they are aware of differences in power and influence and negative images of developing countries as 'backward' and dependent on foreign aid are challenged.

In **history**, pupils understand that people involved in the same historical events had different experiences and views, and that there are a variety of versions and interpretations of these events, which use written and oral sources selectively. They recognise that ordinary people left fewer records of their experience than those with power and influence, but a range of source material, reflecting different experiences, is studied. Work on the Romans, Anglo-Saxons and Vikings, for example, might include devising imaginary accounts written from different viewpoints. Stories related through oral history might be compared with textbook accounts of events such as the Second World War. Anti-Semitism and the Holocaust would be studied at the appropriate key stage and concepts such as racism, human rights and individual and group responsibility to combat injustice would be explored.

Activities in **physical education** are planned to be acceptable to pupils of all religions and there is sensitivity to cultural norms and religious observances. Provision is made for pupils who are fasting or celebrating certain festivals. Where pupils or parents request it, girls are taught in single-sex groups by women and without onlookers and, while taking part in dance lessons, they are not involved in public performances. Games are drawn from a variety of cultures. Staff do not assume that interest and skills in any area of PE are determined by ethnic background or that pupils of certain backgrounds have superior physical abilities. Encouragement to achieve in sport is not given in such a way as to be detrimental to overall educational attainment. Pupils are enabled to develop sensitivity, co-operation and fair play, to accept rules and decisions and to handle success and failure. Name-calling and racial abuse in sport and competitive fixtures are not tolerated and are dealt with as they would be in other areas of school life.

Modern languages are offered beyond those specified as foundation subjects, particularly those spoken by pupils from ethnic minorities at the school. These might include Bengali, Punjabi or Urdu, Spanish or modern Greek, for example. Materials and tasks reflect the fact that speakers of the target language, including a modern European language such as French, are diverse in their nationality, culture, religion and ethnicity. Study of a language takes account of the diversity of accents and usages in different parts of the world. Pupils are encouraged to take an interest in the cultural and social context of their target language and those spoken by other pupils at the school. They understand that bilingualism and multilingualism are very widespread. Pupils' home and community languages are valued and it is emphasised that language is central to a person's sense of identity, though proficiency in Standard English is also stressed as crucially important and essential for examinations and access to continuing education. The presumption that 'everyone abroad speaks English' is countered with steps for encouraging pupils to value others' languages and the ability to converse across different cultures.

Religious education and **collective worship** encourage pupils to recognise those elements and concerns which are common to different religious traditions, without compromising the integrity and distinctiveness of individual faiths. Pupils are aware that Christianity and other world faiths encompass diverse doctrinal and ethical teachings and forms of worship, and that they are not limited to one country or ethnic group, so that generalised statements such as 'all Christians' or 'all Hindus' are invalid. The study of a particular faith is based essentially on believers' own definitions and understandings, and inappropriate categories from another tradition are not imposed on it. Pupils are made aware that believers do not always live up to their ethical traditions, and that religious practice can sometimes be associated with intolerance and oppression. Members of local faith communities who visit the school to talk about their faith come from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, and pupils visit a variety of religious groups and places of worship. Care is taken to ensure that such visits do not reinforce negative attitudes.

Wider issues and financial implications

The multi-cultural society is a resource which ought to be utilised. Drawing on that resource and equipping pupils to live in such a society is a challenge which should be met by all schools, irrespective of their pupils' ethnicity.

It is essential that all schools are adequately funded to buy educational resources that reflect a

desire to value all racial and ethnic groups. It would give a mixed message to pupils if the school advocated tolerance and understanding towards all races, but used or stocked only English books reflecting a European view of life, served only English dishes to pupils and based its assemblies only on Christianity. In order to provide multicultural education, schools need a wide range of materials.

Low expectations of certain ethnic minorities and adverse publicity about them can lead many pupils to have low self-esteem. Schools can work to overcome this by giving equal status to all cultures within the curriculum. They can demonstrate respect by focusing on the festivals of the different faiths and their importance to their faith communities, and introducing pupils to foreign foods and customs in order to overcome fear of the unfamiliar amongst those belonging to the dominant culture.

Language is a major route by which a person can seek acceptance from the society in which they live, but it will not integrate them into that society. In order for new arrivals to become fully integrated, it is important to bring members of the pupils' extended families into the school, encouraging them to contribute. Where the family of the child is supportive of the school, the child has a more positive self-image and will tend to do better educationally. The family could also provide a valuable and positive contribution to the school by bringing in a wealth of materials, photographs, recipes or stories.

Many ethnic groups already contribute substantially to the education service, but teachers must be sensitive to the tensions which may exist within and between some ethnic minority groups, and ensure that all sections of the community are encouraged to play their part.

In working with a diverse community, including some children and parents who may be hostile towards ethnic minorities, teachers will be expected to become a new kind of 'diplomat', displaying new competencies, and for this they need expert training and back-up. This cannot be done in one half-hour per week: it will require constant monitoring and reinforcement. It can be tackled in initial teacher training, but such skills

must also be acquired and updated by qualified, practising teachers. This could be done by the creation of new posts in schools, funded by a separate budget, and by INSET. Speakers for INSET sessions should be invited from all ethnic backgrounds. They will also be a valuable resource in other ways, such as participating in assemblies, RE or oral history, or giving careers talks, so as to reflect a wide range of experiences and to provide role models to which all pupils can aspire.

The school should seek to overcome the racial and sexual stereotypes found in some sections of the media. Positive images should be used wherever possible, to encourage all children. The statistics on school exclusion and school 'failure' seem to fall disproportionately upon young African Caribbean males, and media attention often focuses on the perception, whether based on reality or not, that they are involved disproportionately in crime. Such reports rarely analyse the class and economic factors behind the crime statistics. In order to encourage all pupils to

believe participation in education is worthwhile, positive reinforcement is needed by schools and by the police to rebuild their faith in the 'system' that many believe has failed them. Schools and police liaison representatives need to work together to build trust between all sections of the community and encourage good citizenship.

Language questions

Languages can be used to exclude 'foreigners'. They can also be used to welcome and include. Our education system should welcome and integrate all those who pass through.

To achieve this, it is essential that all schools are equipped to develop both the child's mother tongue and their proficiency in English. Language support given to those without English as a first language must be provided by trained professionals, preferably those who are bilingual themselves. Specialists should be on hand in the school to give assistance to pupils and teachers and this should be available in the classroom.

The teaching of English and respect for the mother tongue must be taught within the mainstream of the timetable wherever possible and withdrawal from the classroom should be avoided unless it is strictly necessary. If a child is constantly withdrawn from lessons, this may be seen as segregation and disapproval and may build barriers around those who need 'extra help'. Children may misinterpret 'extra lessons' as giving preferential treatment to certain pupils or label those who need language support as 'thick' because they need more tuition.

Provision should not be funded simply in a short-term, project-based manner but should be part of the long-term school development plan. While ATL supports Section 11 funding, it wants to see language support put on a more secure basis for the future. Bilingual teachers should be given additional support and encouragement to teach English to pupils and there should be a better career structure available for teachers who have second languages.

Language could be shared by encouraging pupil exchanges, both at home and abroad, exposing the pupil to different food, cultures and lifestyles.

Prejudice is often born out of fear and ignorance and can be passed down through generations. Inherited presuppositions can be challenged by exposure to the experience of what real individuals of other races and cultures are like, and the school should be able to provide this. In order for this to succeed, the support of the local community is vital.

Cultural encounters

Where pupils are admitted as a result of entering the country as refugees, they will have very specific needs which must be met. They may have suffered loss and trauma and will feel displaced. The school may add to this feeling of displacement as its routines, culture and languages may be alien. Teachers cannot alone provide for the particular needs of such children: support is needed in the home, in the community and in the school. Finance is necessary not only to support the child, but also the teacher in understanding the child's needs and expectations. Further useful advice can be found in the Refugee Council's free publication *Helping Refugee Children in Schools*.

Multi-cultural teaching is a skilled task and involves a balancing act. Prejudice may not be overt but can be reinforced by seemingly innocent examples of stereotyping, eg assuming that Asian women will not enter the professions, due to family commitments. Such preconceptions are dangerous: they perpetuate prejudices that sap pupils of their confidence, and can make them feel that the school does not wish them to succeed or that the staff believe that education may be wasted on certain pupils. Teacher education must include some work on an awareness of prejudice and how upbringing, class and socio-economic grouping has an effect upon the way each of us views the world.

Multi-ethnic education must be available in all schools, especially where there are very few children from ethnic minorities. Children in predominantly white areas may have little immediate experience of people from ethnic minorities and would need to encounter different cultures, religions and societies through the school curriculum in the first instance, if they are to develop a tolerance that may be carried forward into later life. Multi-ethnic education must not be seen as a response to 'problems in society' or to 'pupils with problems'. It must be regarded

and valued as an asset. The policy of the school towards its appreciation of different cultures must be published and updated regularly to reflect the changing nature of culture and customs. What was accurate information about traditions in some societies even 20 years ago may not be so today.

It is essential to recruit mainstream teachers from a whole range of cultural and ethnic backgrounds and children from ethnic minorities should be encouraged to enter the profession. Positive reinforcement for all pupils must come from the 'establishment'. It must be shown that all races and cultures can work together to produce a learning environment that is free from racial and sexual bias. For this to become a reality, schools must look carefully at their recruitment policies in order to eliminate racial or sexual bias there. Some people who were not born in the UK, including those entering the country as refugees, may have been denied the opportunity to participate in regular, formal education in their own countries. People in this situation should be given every encouragement and support to gain the qualifications they need to enter the profession. Access courses can be a first step in this direction.

Challenges to change

Educational establishments can take on a leading role in the whole area of equal opportunities. The potential for change in both attitudes and behaviour is immense.

Although a school is only a microcosm of society, children can be among those who challenge damaging stereotypes and negative attitudes, both as school pupils and in their adult lives. They can do this only when they see a commitment to racial equality within the education system itself, and for that system to take on such a responsibility, it must be secure in its own place in society. If we are to expect teachers to be ambassadors and diplomats for our future generations, they must also feel valued and secure. Greater investment is needed in schools, and certainly there needs to be on-going training for teachers in the practical implementation of racial equality.

Much work is still to be done in this area, but such input now would reap substantial benefits in the future for the children and for society. Real equality will only be achieved when race itself is no longer an issue.

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